

Sermon Outline.

CHRIST AND THE POOR, AND THE CHURCH AND THE POOR.

SERMON NO. 3.

Why are the masses separated from the church?
James ii, 1-9.

INTRODUCTION.

1. A review.

(1) We have seen that the poor as a class identified themselves with Christ and the early church.

(2) We have shown that.

a. The modern church is identified with the well-to-do classes rather than with the masses. b. And that the masses are not only separated from the church but, are in opposition to her, at least they are indifferent about her welfare.

2. So it becomes a very serious question to all lovers of the church, why the very class that once so largely formed the membership of the church is now without her borders and with no desire to be within them.

I. THE CAUSE OF THIS SEPARATION.

Dr. Josiah Strong General Secretary of The Evangelical Alliance, in his late book, *THE NEW ERA*, divides these causes into three classes. For want of a better classification, I will, in the main, follow his.

1. Causes that may account for a general loosening of the church going habit.

(1) The foreign element in our population. This is very large especially in the city. According to the tenth census 80 per cent of the population of New York City is foreign born or children of foreign-born parents. Chicago, 87 per cent, St. Louis, 78 per cent. These come with their foreign ideas, especially their continental ideas of the Sabbath, and they helped to reduce church attendance.

(2) Modern business methods. There is such competition and consequent absorption in business for six days in the week that when Sunday comes there is but little relish for "things divine," and less disposition to make the necessary effort to attend upon "divine service."

(3) Oft removals, "Our almost nomadic habits of life break up church relationship." And too often when

church members move into a strange community they do not at once attach themselves to some church, and thus the habit of attending church is soon lost and it is hard to renew it.

(4) The power of the pulpit. Once the pulpit was the great educator. It was the center, and soul of moral and intellectual influence. Now it must compete with books, magazines, and papers, and especially with the Sunday morning paper. "It is so spicy," "so fresh" and "so religious." "It has a religious column, often a sermon and it will do me as much good to remain at home and read these good things as to go to church." Besides the preacher is so dull I can't keep my eyes open."

(5) The Sunday school. Notwithstanding the great good it has done it is the occasion of and excuse for not attending church with many, too many children and young people think if they go to Sunday school they need not go to church; and thus the habit of church-going is not formed in youth, when they become too old to attend Sunday school, they are lost to the church.

(6) Proxy religion. Many now think they pay the minister to do their Christian work, and that they are under no obligation to look after the religious interests of their neighbors. The pastor cannot, with his multiplied duties look after each individual, and thus the many are neglected.

(7) Loose ideas of duty. Sturdy character is not so common now as formerly. Duty is almost an unknown word in the nursery and the family. Children do not now do what they ought but what they please. They are not commanded but hired and cecaxed. Instead of the "hickory" they get the nut; instead of the apple sprout they get the apple. They are not taught now that it is a duty to attend church and commanded to do it. They grow up to attend church if they feel like it; and when grown up there are so many reasons for not feeling like it.

(8) Other places to attend, there are the thousand and one societies, clubs, and lodges to attend. They are so benevolent—if you pay your dues—that many use them as a salve to their conscience—a kind of substitute for the church. Then there is the

heater in full blast seven nights in the week. And the saloon, the devil's church. People who, as a rule, attend the two latter institutions have little or no relish for the Lord's house.

(9) The theory of total depravity. That by nature the masses are accursed. But why is it that the poor happen to have all the depravity?

The above cause may account for a general loosening of the church going habit in America; but not for the fact that it is the working man that is the non church-goer. For these are causes that apply to all classes.

2. Causes which may account for the class church not reaching and holding the masses.

(1) The pew rent system. This at least gives occasion of offense and excuses for not attending church.

(2) Church dress. The contrast between the dress of the classes and the masses is too clear not to be seen and noted by the workingman and his family.

(3) Class indifference and antipathy. This is the most weighty of the second class of causes.

Illustrations. a. In the prayer meeting of a wealthy and influential New England church a gentleman arose and said, I called upon that man who at the fire so heroically saved eight or ten lives at the risk of his own. I found that he and his family were poor, and that they attend no church. I invited them to our church, and now, brethren, I hope when they come, you will give them a cordial welcome and make room for them in your pews. The wealthiest man in the church arose and said: I don't want that family in my pew, or near my pew, or in this church.

b. A church not a thousand miles away discouraged some working girls taking membership in it, on the plea that there would be no "affinity" or congeniality between them and its members. And the same church told a reformed drunkard on applying for membership that there were, at present no vacancies in the membership.

(c) A church in New York when two laymen undertook to "go out into the highways," and their efforts were successful; and when the poor urchins began to gather into the S. S. the parents were shocked and ordered that